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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001833

SIPDIS

FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
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SUBJECT: MUGABE VOWS TO STAY THE COURSE IN PUBLIC SPEECHES

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

SUMMARY:

1. (C) In his annual Heroes Day Speech on August 12, only sparsely attended by the diplomatic community, Mugabe showed no indication of veering from his current disastrous policy course. He vowed to continue with the fast track resettlement effort but said that "loyal" commercial farmers would be allowed to stay. He threatened retaliatory measures against the EU and United States for their "sanctions" on Zimbabwe. In a separate speech on August 13, in honor of Defense Forces Day, Mugabe said the recent DRC-Rwanda agreement had paved the way for a Zimbabwean withdrawal from the DRC, although he did not provide a timeline for such action. We suspect that Mugabe intends to allow only those farmers who eschew any political involvement and confrontation with the GOZ to remain on their farms, thus further strengthening ZANU-PF's hand in rural areas. End Summary.

LAND

2. (U) Land was the main focus of Mugabe's August 12 Heroes Day address, not surprisingly given the August 8 deadline for many commercial farmers to leave their properties. Mugabe indicated there was no going back from rectifying historical wrongs, and he drew parallels between land ownership and national sovereignty. He said resettlement should be completed by the end of August, so new farmers can be given inputs and have seeds in the ground when the rains start in October. He said that "loyal" commercial farmers, i.e. those who respect the GOZ, would be allowed to stay.

ATMOSPHERICS

3. (U) The August 12 event was sparsely attended by the diplomatic community, although August summer vacations could be the reason for many of the EU absences. A banner in front of the diplomatic tent--mostly filled with ZANU-PF supporters--exclaimed, "Britain, No One Believes Your Lies!"

YOUTH SERVICE

4. (C) Mugabe defended young people who "slugged it out" on the farms along with older war veterans, applauding those young people as war veterans themselves in the fight for their land. He insisted that the GOZ would press forward with a "Youth Service Programme" which he said would build a cadre of patriotic Zimbabweans who are prepared to defend the country's sovereignty and interests. (Comment: This pledge to establish a national service program has generated widespread concern in Zimbabwe, given the role played by the youth militia during the recent presidential campaign. End Comment.)

POINTING THE FINGER, AS ALWAYS

5. (U) Mugabe's Heroes Day speech had a full dose of his standard anti-Britain, anti-EU, and anti-U.S. rhetoric, referring to the West as the "oppressing nations". Predictably, Britain got extra lashes. "We do not kowtow to imperialists," he said, mentioning Prime Minister Blair as the worst culprit. "To those who want to own this country for Britain... ..we say here on this national shrine that the game is up and it is time for them to go," he said. Attempting to divide and rule, Mugabe said he understands that some EU countries sympathize with the GOZ, but are finding it difficult to resist British dictates. He also attempted to separate the British people from the British government saying, the British people know their government's policies are unjust. Mugabe threatened to take retaliatory steps in response to U.S. and EU sanctions, reminding those governments that they have interests in Zimbabwe too, which could be targeted with phased but unspecified counter-sanctions.

OPPOSITION RESPONSE

6. (C) Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai criticized Mugabe for turning an occasion meant to honor Zimbabwe's national

heroes into a purely partisan event. (Comment: We understand that a substantial number of the MDC's Members of Parliament attended the event, but that Tsvangirai was dissuaded from doing so by advisors who said his security could not be guaranteed. End Comment.)

DEFENSE FORCES DAY

17. (U) During his speech to commemorate Zimbabwean Defense Forces (ZDF) Day on August 13, Mugabe announced formally that, due to the recent peace accord between the DRC and Rwanda, ZDF would be withdrawing from the DRC. He provided no timeline for such action, however. He said ZDF members had benefited from the land resettlement program and would continue to do so. He praised the ZDF for building strong relationships with communities throughout Zimbabwe, and called on Zimbabweans to take advantage of business opportunities in the newly-peaceful DRC.

COMMENT:

18. (C) Mugabe gave nothing publicly on land. However, his remarks suggest he is inclined to declare victory in the next month or two and to allow those farmers who eschew confrontation with the government, and sever ties with the MDC, to continue to earn a living, albeit on truncated pieces of land. We expect a triage is in the offing, with JAG members the first targets. Any farmer tainted with opposition activism, or not willing to live by Mugabe's rules will almost certainly have to pack his bags. If the GOZ follows through on this approach--and it seems determined to do so--one effect will be to remove a key source of financial support for the MDC and to eliminate vital rural footholds for the MDC. End Comment

WHITEHEAD